

## Note of decisions taken and actions required

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<b>Title:</b>	Fire Services Management Committee
<b>Date and time:</b>	Friday 19 July 2013, 11.00am
<b>Venue:</b>	Westminster Suite Room 8.1

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### Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council
Chairman	Cllr Kay Hammond	Surrey CC
Vice chair	Cllr Sian Timoney	Luton BC
Deputy chair	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire FRS
Members	Cllr Maurice Heaster OBE	London FEPA
	Cllr John Bell	Greater Manchester FRA
	Cllr David Topping	Cheshire FA
	Cllr Kevin Foster	West Midlands FRA
	Cllr Mark Healey	Devon & Somerset FRS
	Cllr John Joyce	Cheshire FA
	Cllr Navin Shah	London FEPA
	Cllr John Edwards	West Midlands FRA
Substitutes	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside FRA
	Cllr Roger Price	Hampshire CC
	Cllr Mehboob Khan	West Yorkshire FA
Apologies	Cllr Brian Copping (Deputy chair)	Shepway DC
	Cllr Keith Aspden	North Yorkshire FRA
	Cllr Julie Young	Essex FRA
Observers:	Mr James Cleverly AM	South Yorkshire Fire
	Cllr Phil Howson	East Sussex FRA
Officers:	Helen Murray, Eamon Lally, Gill Gittins, Clive Harris, Steve Service (all LGA)	

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
	<p>Councillor Kay Hammond welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting. She asked that a moment of silence be observed for the firefighter who died in the Oldham Street fire in Manchester earlier that week and asked Cllr Bell to convey the Committee's condolences to the authority.</p>	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Chairman's Report</b>	
	<p>The Chairman gave an update on work she had taken part in since the last committee as documented in the report, and added that she had undertaken live radio interviews on FiReControl in 5 parts of the country.</p> <p>Cllr Hammond asked for it to be noted that contrary to what was indicated in the paper, Sir Ken Knight was unable to attend the breakfast session at the LGA conference.</p>	
	<b>Action</b>	
	Officers to note the amendment to the report regarding Sir Ken Knight's breakfast session.	<b>LGA officers</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Lakanal House Fire</b>	
	<p>Commissioner Dobson summarised the report. He said that the FSMC had a role in ensuring that the messages emerging from the coroner's findings got fed back to Fire Authorities and lobbying for any changes to building regulations which may be required. The LGA's guidance produced at the Lakanal House Fire inquest had been very well received.</p> <p>Cllr Shah said that LFEPA had recently set up a cross party working group to address the wider issues emerging from the fire and develop an action plan with good practice examples. He suggested that the concluding document be brought back to the FSMC. Members agreed that its findings should be incorporated into the LGA's work programme going forward.</p> <p>Members argued that there was still a case to be made to Government for building regulations to be altered to make sprinkler installation easier beyond new build properties, including enabling landlords to be able to access properties to retro-fit sprinklers.</p>	

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Members highlighted LFEPA's committee as a potential opportunity to engage with landlords to get buy-in on this issue.

The Committee felt more could be done to disseminate information to communities and enable them to lobby their MPs.

Members highlighted the wider potential impact of sprinklers on communities beyond saving lives, including the economic benefit to jobs.

Members stressed the need to set clear timeframes for achieving their goals and identify where the opposition to sprinklers in Government lay to better focus the LGA's campaign.

Action

Officers to take forward in line with member's comments.

**LGA officers**

**3. 'Facing the Future Report by Sir Ken Knight: response to Government**

The Chairman and Eamon Lally, LGA Senior Adviser introduced this report. Cllr Hammond said that the LGA had submitted an interim report to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee which had been approved by the lead members. Eamon added that the Committee had relied heavily on this report in oral evidence to date and Cllr Hammond had been asked to go before it in September to give further evidence.

Members emphasised the importance of the sector managing its own efficiencies rather than having a top-down reorganisation imposed on it.

The Committee discussed the prospect of bringing the ambulance service into the local government family. Cllr Hilton reported that he had spoken with Neil O'Connor about this possibility and he indicated that the minister might be interested. While some members advocated looking at a pathfinder service combining fire and ambulance, others were sceptical about how easily this would work in practice, given the lack of interest by ambulance services in co-working projects to date.

Cllr Hammond said that she has raised the issue of where the ambulance service is located in terms of the other emergency services with Eric Pickles at conference and he gave assurances that he was working on it. She added that blue light interoperability is a key feature of Surrey's business plan.

Some members questioned the timing of Sir Ken's review given that he could have made many of the changes he suggested in his time as a CFO and argued that attempts should be focused on influencing Sir Ken's successor instead. However, Cllr Hammond argued that it was right Sir Ken had taken the opportunity to reflect on the service and his review demonstrated recognition that fire had moved on as a service since his time as a serving officer.

Members highlighted that Sir Ken had pegged the financial impact of his review proposals to 2011 but argued that the current period of reductions would remove any slack in fire authority budgets. Cllr Hammond agreed to feed this back to the select committee.

Action

Cllr Hammond / LGA Officers to incorporate member comments into select committee evidence and final draft of response to Government.

**Cllr Hammond /  
LGA Officers**

**4. Future of National Operational Guidance**

Helen Murray announced that CFO Roy Wilsher was leading on this collaborative project between the LGA and CFOA and 34 CFOs were already on board. She commended the NOG website [www.ukfrs.com](http://www.ukfrs.com) to members as an informative account of work on the project to date.

Cllr Khan said that he was pleased with the work and that it demonstrated the maturity of the sector. He advocated that the LGA write to CFOA to thank them for the work they had done.

Members raised the issue of matchfunding. If the level of sector contributions remained at £10,000 per authority for the programme, they agreed that it would be easier to have a single flat rate. However, the Committee cautioned that if the level of contribution increased significantly this could affect the appropriateness of a flat rate for all.

While it was felt that the sector would be happy to take on responsibility for the programme, members were also mindful that the NOG programme could mark the beginning of a wider budget transfer from DCLG to the sector. Given current financial pressures, members stressed that Government must give it the money necessary to fund such projects and not expect authority budgets to cover them alone.

Cllr Hammond said that a central pot was being made available and urged FRAs to bid for it. However, she also stressed that there was also an expectation that the fire service will contribute to it.

Decision

Members **agreed** to endorse the Strategy Board's bidding proposal as outlined in paragraph 15 of the report.

Action

Committee to write thankyou letter to CFOA for work done on the NOG programme.

**Helen Murray /  
Steve Service**

**5. Fire Control**

CFO Dave Webb, Leicestershire Fire presented this report. He announced that a new national mobile communication service for all three emergency services, the Emergency Services Network (ESN) will replace the Airwave service currently in use. However, Mr Webb cautioned that while an invitation to tender was likely to go out in 2014 and the current intention was for the new network to be operational by 2016, actual timescales were still very uncertain. At present, he advocated that the changes be highlighted to FRAs to ensure that the transition period was on their risk registers.

Cllr Hammond asked that the point regarding risk registers go in the next fire bulletin.

Some members felt that there was a lack of detail in the report on what Fire Control projects were taking place. However, others argued that the paper was intended as an overview rather than an in-depth report. Officers agreed to send a briefing note to members who would like further information.

Action

Officers to ensure FAs are alerted to importance of ESN being on risk registers via next fire bulletin.

**Clive Harris**

Officers to send a more detailed note on Fire Control projects taking place to members who requested further information.

**Eamon Lally**

**6. Fire and Rescue Service Pilots considering the application of  
Primary Authority to Fire Safety**

Eamon Lally, LGA Senior Adviser introduced this report. He said that findings from the two Government pilots considering the application of Primary Authority to Fire Safety suggested that there is capacity to apply a primary authority scheme to the sector. However there was still some uncertainty over which scheme was most appropriate. He added that Cllr Hammond is due to give evidence at a ministerial meeting on this issue on 8 August.

Eamon stressed that when the scheme should be implemented is also a key factor, with the initial proposal of October leaving FAs very little time to get it up and running.

While some members concurred with CFOA's initial view that a non-statutory scheme would be better than a statutory one, the committee agreed that the process of evidence-gathering was not yet advanced enough to make a decision and it would be better to wait until April 2014 to implement any scheme properly. Cllr Hammond agreed to communicate this view to ministers as part of her evidence.

Action

Officers to bring the Primary authority scheme issue back to the committee in the Autumn.

**Eamon Lally /  
Steve Service**

**7. End of year report**

Cllr Hammond announced that Cllr Sian Timoney would be stepping down as Vice Chair of the FSMC at the end of August. She thanked Cllr Timoney on behalf of the Committee for her work on the committee over the previous 3 years.

Cllr Hammond also expressed gratitude to Commissioner Dobson and LGA officers for their support and advice to the FSMC in the last year. She asked members to consider the committee's priorities for 2013/14.

Members agreed that the onus was on fire authorities to show leadership and go to Government with solutions rather than They outlined the following issues for consideration:

**Retained firefighters** - in light of the Government's stance on

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retained firefighters, it was felt that employers may now have to reconsider how they prioritise daytime / part-time cover.

The **Grey book** and any changes necessary since its last update in 2009.

**National resilience** and how to ensure that the Government continues funding it.

The continued review of the **Fire Service College** and its operations under private ownership.

Members noted attempts to establish a **collaborative pathway between fire and local authorities** in some areas of deprivation, as these are often the places where most incidents occur. It was argued that a focus by the committee on lobbying to overcome data protection barriers could help progress this process.

Members argued that a further causal factor in deprived areas was an absence of wired smoke alarms in many properties. They suggested that the Committee could look at the areas where fire deaths were most prevalent and what pressure could be applied to Government to legislate against **negligent landlords** in these areas.

On **sprinklers**, Cllr Edwards said that more could be done to develop the toolkit, working with CFOA to develop the campaign further. He advocated harnessing a wide body of evidence to get the public's attention. Clive Harris, LGA Adviser added that a week of action in conjunction with CFOA was planned for the spring, with Cllr Edwards attending CFOA's next meeting.

However, some members expressed doubt over whether the LGA's Communication channels alone would be robust enough to handle such a widescale and complex campaign.

Cllr Hammond reported on **peer challenge** that Cardiff University was currently doing a study to measure the effectiveness of the process.

Members discussed how fire might contribute towards a **dementia strategy** by strengthening links with health and social care services in this area.

Decision

Members **agreed** that an overview of the Committee's achievements be communicated more widely to FRAs along with inviting priorities for the 2013/14 cycle.

Action

Officers to incorporate members' suggestions into a draft 2013/14 FSMC priorities paper for consideration at the September committee.

**LGA Officers**

Officers to circulate report to FRAs and canvas their views on priorities going forward.

**LGA Officers**

**8. Fire Services Management Committee update paper**

Members **noted** the report.

**9. Industrial relations**

Gill Gittins, LGA Principal Negotiating Officer updated the Committee on the latest developments in industrial relations.

Gill confirmed that the Government announced that they had no intention to pursue a national fitness standard for the fire service. Some members felt that the LGA should urge the Government to renegotiate on this to enable firefighters of 50+ to be redeployed if they were no longer physically capable of active duty.

However, Cllrs Hammond and Heaster stressed that the LGA's responsibility was to ensure employers were prepared in a strike scenario rather than to establish a position on fitness or get involved in lobbying on the detail of any pensions dispute between Government and the FBU.

Decision

Members **approved** the nomination of Sean Ruth to replace Roy Wilsher as adviser to the National Employers.

**10. Outside bodies update**

Cllr Hilton gave a verbal update on the **Strategic Resilience Board** which met in the last month. He reported that the minister had stated at the meeting that no top slice would be awarded for resilience.



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Cllr Hilton said that the National Resilience Board is in negotiation with the Fire Service College over their intention to charge VAT on courses, given that the Board is not VAT registered.

The Board also discussed the renewal of protective equipment.

Cllr Price summarised the discussion from the previous meeting of the **Arson Prevention Forum**. A representative from the insurance industry present stated that fire contributes 40 per cent of total losses claimed for. Cllr Price argued that this could be a useful statistic to quote as part of the LGA's sprinklers campaign.

Cllr Bell noted the inclusion of the **LGA Fire bulletin** as an appendix to the paper and said he would like to see it issued to all Fire authority members and Chiefs. Officers said that the bulletin was circulated through LGA members "opting in" to ensure recipients were happy to receive it. However, they agreed to look at ways to widen the circulation of the bulletin through LGA publicity channels.

Members **noted** the update.

Action

Officers to publicise the Fire bulletin as part of new Board cycle communications with fire authority members.

**11. Note of the last meeting - 17 May 2013**

Members **noted** the minutes of the previous meeting.

**LGA Officers**

**Date of Next Meeting:**

Thursday, 19 September 2013 at 11.00am in Local Government House.